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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 20 September 1991, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

CONTENTS

Preparations for the fifth programming cycle: special programme resources (continued)

Other matters (continued)

Closure of the session

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIFTH PROGRAMMING CYCLE: SPECIAL PROGRAMME RESOURCES (continued) (DP/1991/SCPM/L.7 and L.8)

1. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya), speaking as Chairman of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, informed the Council that the Standing Committee had concluded its consideration of the substantive items of its agenda relating specifically to Special Programme Resources (SPRs) and the future work programme of the Committee including field visits. Although the Committee had made good progress it needed to concentrate more on programme-related work and to focus its work more closely in order to avoid duplicating the work of the Governing Council. With regard to the participation of the developing countries he pointed out that the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) could be successful only if all parties involved participated effectively and were well represented. The programme approval process needed to be streamlined and the emphasis should be on ensuring programme effectiveness. Finally it was important that there should not be two separate organizations, on in the field and one at headquarters. The most important source of information for the Governing Council and the Standing Committee was the organization in the field, where projects were actually carried out; such information could be obtained only with the assistance of headquarters. That again raised the issues of decentralization and capacity-building. Headquarters had an important role to play in ensuring that field staff felt that due account was taken of their work and in making feelings at field level known to the Governing Council. The work of the Governing Council was meaningful to the developing countries only if officials and people in the field could see that UNDP was doing something.

2. Mr. SIEBER (Switzerland), speaking as Rapporteur of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, introduced the Committee's report (DP/1991/SCPM/L.7 and Add.1-7), and drew attention to the draft decision on special programme resources contained in document DP/1991/SCPM/L.8.

3. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. UMER (Pakistan) said that he did not understand how the Administration was going to interpret paragraphs, 14, 15 and 16 which referred to an allocation of $50 million for disaster mitigation and how it should be utilized.

6. Mr. EDGREN (Assistant Administrator) said that the Administration would revised the programming documents in light of the comments that had been made and would attempt to reconcile conflicting views.

7. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) suggested that, in future, the Standing Committee for Programme Matters should consider carefully what decisions it wished to put forward, since the Administration could respond directly only to decisions. Nevertheless he felt that matters could be resolved satisfactorily.

8. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) had reservations regarding the value of having both a decision and an agreed report. The primary function of the report was to serve as a working document; it was pointless to spend time attempting to ensure complete fairness and balance. If the report was to be presented for consideration by others, it could be put forward as a document prepared on the authority of the Rapporteur. He hoped that the procedures could be streamlined.

9. Ms. CARTER (United States of America) said that she had found the process just completed very informative and useful. She particularly appreciated members' remarks concerning the Special Programme Resources (SPRs). Her delegation's position on the need for improved programming of UNDP's centrally controlled resources, including the SPRs, was well known. The dramatic growth of such funds had brought increased responsibility for sound programming and management on the part of both UNDP and its members. Her delegation had reluctantly joined the consensus on the decision authorizing the spending of nearly a full year of SPR resources. The Administration would have to make a serious effort to revise the documents for submission to the Governing Council in February; it would also have to be cautious how it spent the 15 per cent advance funding and be prepared to report thereon in February. Her delegation expected substantial revisions to the documents and was fully prepared to object to any or all documents which did not meet the requirements set out in Council decision 91/3. It would not agree to further advances of authority until the required programming document was approved. She hoped that the process of revising the documents would be a collaborative one and that there would be a thorough and systematic internal review of SPR programme documents before February.

10. The Council's work of providing guidance and oversight to UNDP's programme would be greatly facilitated by well prepared and carefully thought out proposals from the Administration. The quality of UNDP's proposals, the demonstrated impact of its programmes and the actions of the Administrator carrying out the decisions of the Council were key factors in ensuring that UNDP retained the confidence of major contributors.

11. Mr. RADE (Netherlands) said that if he had understood the United States delegation correctly, it meant to block approval if the documents were not satisfactory. That raised the issue of how the decision should be interpreted. It was his understanding that the decision did not mean that one delegation would be able to block approval but rather that documents would be approved on a no-objection basis and that objections by more than one country would be required in order to block approval.

12. Ms. CARTER (United States of America) replied that her delegation understood the decision to mean that, if a member of the Council found one of the subcategories in a document to be unsatisfactory, it had the right not to approve the document in question. Such an action was not, however, tantamount to a blanket rejection of all the documents: other documents, which were satisfactory to all delegations, could go forward for approval.

13. Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that his delegation shared the understanding expressed by the United States. The "no-objection basis" referred to in the report of the Standing Committee meant that if no objection was expressed by any delegation, the document could be automatically adopted; however, if an objection was expressed by any delegation approval of the particular document would be blocked.

14. Mr. GOMEZ (Associate Administrator), referring to UNDP's refusal to pay travel expenses for certain delegates to the Council's resumed thirty-eighth session, said that the provisions of decisions 90/23 and 91/2 permitted UNDP funding of travel and per diem expenses for intersessional meetings of the Standing Committee only. If the UNDP secretariat agreed to pay the travel expenses in question it would be violating the explicit terms of those decisions and would be acting without legislative authority.

15. If the Council wished to broaden the conditions for payment of travel expenses, a new decision would be required. If the Council so wished, the matter could be put on the agenda for the February session of the Governing Council.

16. THE PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to take note of the report of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters.

17. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS (continued)

18. Ms. CARTER (United States of America) said that her delegation had grave concerns regarding the issue of senior management structure and the implementation of Council decision 91/43. Many delegations had opposed any action at all by the Administrator to change the UNDP management structure without further review, and the decision, reached through a difficult compromise, allowed some actions to proceed but did not include any implementation of the divisional manager concept or the strategy group. The United States believed that unless that decision was fully respected, members of the Council would be very reluctant to enter into compromises in future decisions, and would favour definite decisions with even less flexibility than was permitted in decision 91/43. The consequences of that development would be most unfortunate.

19. Mr. CARMICHAEL (Canada) and Ms. SCHAFER-PREUSS said that their delegations shared the concerns expressed by the representative of the United States.

20. Mr. JASINSKI (Poland) said, that under decision 91/43 the Administrator was required to take into account views expressed at the June and the current sessions in developing the divisional manager concept. Poland believed that the responsibilities and accountability of the divisional manager must be clarified and that the concept should be tested on an experimental basis to ascertain whether, in fact, it was workable.

21. The PRESIDENT said that the question of the senior management of the Administration had not yet been discussed and would be raised in other bodies and developed in informal consultations before the next meeting of the Council.

22. Mr. FONDI (Italy) said, with reference to the question of divisional managers, that Italy believed that it was within the power of the Administrator to conduct pilot studies in the field of management structure with a view to submitting a report to the Governing Council, provided there were no budgetary implications. That did not mean that Italy was in favour of the proposal: his delegation merely believed that the Administrator should have a certain degree of autonomy in the question of management.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

23. The PRESIDENT said that the dedication and competence of his collaborators on the Bureau combined with the hard work and negotiating skills demonstrated by the members of the Council had enabled the Council to bring its work to a successful conclusion, despite the serious difficulties encountered on the way. Speaking on behalf of the secretariat, the Governing Council, members of the Standing Committee and of the Administration, he paid tribute to Mr. Kirdar, the outgoing Secretary, for his outstanding contribution to the work of UNDP and its Governing Council over the past 12 years. He declared the session closed.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.